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ABSTRACT

In an attempt to correct recent Veterans Administration (VA) regulations restricting benefits for veterans enrolled in cooperative education programs at community colleges, this paper describes the value of cooperative education, both vocational and general, and argues the supporting intent of federal law in Title 38 of the U. S. Code. Many community colleges emphasize the vocational area in the funding of new cooperative education programs; it is equally important for liberal arts students to experience the learning situation of work related to college study. The Napa College Work Experience program sets measurable learning objectives for the student at the beginning of the work experience, in terms of skill development, increased knowledge, and attitudes and motivations. Results of this procedure have been favorably received by students, employers and the college. Other features of Napa's Work Experience program are detailed. The proposal that cooperative education continue to be an approved course of study for veterans is presented, and recommendations for action by educators and by the Veterans Administration are suggested. (MJS)

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COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

General and Vocational and the Veterans Administration

*A paper aimed at correcting Veteran
Administration regulations restricting
Cooperative Education*

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INTRODUCTION

In the last six months, several mandates have come from the Veteran Administration, changing the requirements for the ability to claim benefits for attendance in certain college programs, (particularly the Cooperation Education Programs) at Colleges and Universities throughout the United States. As a result, a program that was heavily enrolled with Veteran students is being discarded for the more traditional academic program. The VA has had a traditional outlook to Education that has hindered their consideration of new approaches. This has resulted in the VA penalizing new innovative approaches and preventing education in assisting these non-traditional students, our veterans. Yet, Title 38, Chap. 34, Sec. 1651, of the U.S. Code states . . . "that the education program created by this chapter is for the purpose of (1) enhancing and making more attractive service in the Armed Forces of the United States, (2) extending the benefits of a higher education to qualified and deserving young persons who might not otherwise be able to afford such an education, (3) providing vocational readjustment and restoring lost educational opportunities to those servicemen and women whose careers have been interrupted or impelled by reason of active duty after January 31, 1955, and (4) aiding such persons in attaining vocational and educational status which they might not normally have aspired to and obtained had they not served their country." The code states that we should support Veterans in the educational pursuit they have chosen, not based on traditional concepts of VA officials.

This paper will describe the value of Cooperative Education, both vocational and general, as well as depict the supporting intent of Federal law in Title 38 of the U.S. Code. In the end we have made some recommendations that we hope will be considered and instituted by the VA as they relate to general and vocational Cooperative Education.

NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENT AND CO-OP

Today's veteran is 26 years old with a small family. He was discharged from the service with minimal skills and now finds himself/herself locked into an unemployment cycle. Today's Cooperative Education Program is designed to accommodate this student. In a report by David West for a project conducted by the San Mateo Community College District on Cooperative Education, "New Horizons in Cooperative Education," he states that: For a number of student veterans, not associated with the community college and its role in providing education, career goals and objectives are mere frustrations. For many who are acquainted with higher education, the traditional methods of providing education and/or training exclude these students by placing too much emphasis on specified times, places and dates. A sizable number of these persons are minority, female, disadvantaged, handicapped, and aged, all of which are veterans. To reach and meet the needs of these persons; an innovative approach to our current instructional delivery system for occupational education

in the community college is indicated. There is a need for individualized learning approaches that transcend the notions of a one-to-one teacher-student relationship and focuses upon individual learning needs. "In doing so, a new kind of student and greater audiences will be reached. Notwithstanding, the unique learning needs of the disadvantaged, handicapped, and the aged, there is a sizable audience to be served among the technologically unemployed, persons undergoing career changes, the underemployed, etc. All of these persons will benefit from coordinated instruction, based on a thorough diagnosis of learning needs and prescribed to meet these needs."

The report found that Cooperative Education is particularly inviting to Veterans in the Western Region of the United States. Coordinators report that from 25% to 50% of their programs are made up of returning Veterans. This has since changed because of the restrictive VA regulations eliminating Work Experience as a viable option. In community colleges of the United States, Cooperative Education is developing at a rapid pace which is expected to grow for years to come. Emphasis on funding of new programs in many community colleges has been in the vocational area. Consequently, in these programs there tends to be a lack of program orientation to include liberal arts transfer students. However, since the intent of all cooperative plans is to merge the resources of employers and schools to prepare young people for careers and significant adult roles in society, it seems realistic to move ahead on the assumption that it is equally important for liberal arts students to experience the learning situations of work related to college study.

Community college emphasis on vocational cooperative education has no doubt caused some students, particularly educationally disadvantaged low-income students, to overlook the possibilities for full upper-division and graduate college experience through the cooperative plan. The purpose of New Horizons Project by San Mateo is to bring together in a comprehensive design the best of all programs as well as the action of Sinclair Jeter who heads up the Federal Co-Ed Program.

The large number of returning Veterans enrolled in community colleges, many of them supporting families and an estimated 25% having minority backgrounds, are realizing the practical education and career advancement opportunities that exist through cooperative education. More than 2,800 Veterans are now enrolled in the three colleges of the New Horizons Project in San Mateo. In addition to improved learning opportunities they gain increased value from their military benefits through cooperative education, making their training and educational dollars go farther towards their careers. This complies with the intent of President Ford's message on Career Education and the emphasis by federal programs to enhance the employment opportunities of Veterans. The CETA Titles I and II of 1974 encourage the employment of Veterans. U.S. Code Title 41, section 2003; "states that the State Veterans Employment Representatives (EDD) in cooperation with the Public Employment Staff shall: ... (3) match eligible Veterans particular qualifications with an available job of On the Job Training or

apprenticeship opportunity which is commensurate with those qualifications and keep eligible Veterans advised of opportunities and training." I interpret training to include Cooperative Education Experience. The U.S. Code Title 38, Chapter 41, Section 2007, ... "to insure that each veteran who requests assistance under this chapter shall be promptly placed in a satisfactory job or job training opportunity (is this not Coop-Ed?) or receive some other specific form of assistance designed to enhance his employment prospects substantially, such as individual job development or employment counseling services."

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Education is a service provided by the State as part of their State constitutional mandates. The various federal legislation, like Title 38, are to be aids to the Educational goals of the State, not mandates. The Veteran education benefits are entitlements of the Veteran to obtain selected career goals. In the forward to Title 38 of the U.S. Code, it is stated on page 4 that "A Veteran may be paid an educational allowance while (1) pursuing a program of education at an approved educational institution; (2) enrolled in a farm cooperative program in an Educational Institution; (3) receiving cooperative training in a business or industrial establishment; (4) pursuing a full-time program of an apprenticeship or other on-the-job training; (5) receiving flight training; (6) pursuing a program exclusively by correspondence; and, (7) engaged in certain other specified educational pursuits.

The code indicates that cooperative education would be in line with the general guideline. If our federal programs are to maximize their effectiveness, it seems that cooperative effort would be the rule rather than the exception. In this case, Cooperative Education provides job training while a student is obtaining a degree in addition to the understanding of how to pursue and obtain a job via use of resume, interview techniques and personal confidence.

ON CAMPUS PROGRAM

At Napa College, work experience instructors and coordinators demand various measurable reports from their enrolled student/veterans (see enclosures). These courses can be utilized as electives towards an Associate Arts or Associate Science degree and are acceptable for graduation. Also arrangements have been made with local State Universities regarding the transferability of these units towards a four year degree.

There is an assigned instructor who, prior to the first day of the course, designs an approved program of specific activities and objectives. There is a unit subject description for these courses included within our official catalog. I might add that there is a district plan and course description requirement and practice that demands that the planned program of activities and objectives of these courses be ultimately controlled by the College.

Like other courses, at Napa College, instructors of Work Experience courses are concerned with the knowledge that is acquired by the reading of the required college text. Our Work Experience instructors take the students a step beyond other courses, when they insist upon the student/Veteran application of this acquired knowledge on the job. Thus, there are the specific written and applied objectives promulgated by the instructors which each student must complete in order to complete the course. Performance levels to be attained, the time and manner of development, as well as overall procedures for educational growth within the field of employment, are agreed upon prior to or during the early part of each semester. Within these courses there is interaction between the instructor and student as an efficient weekly roster is maintained by the instructor. Each student is provided with measurable learning objectives which are intended to ameliorate his/her academic awareness vis-a-vis their occupational position in life.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

Management by Objectives (MBO) is one of the more significant current trends in business and industry to improve the effectiveness of personnel and operations. The aim is to focus all of the energies of the institution on predetermined performance objectives which are to be accomplished. The same concept applies to our cooperative Education program. Measurable learning objectives for cooperative work experience are classified in terms of (1) skill development, (2) increased knowledge and (3) attitudes and motivation. These categories are derived from corresponding basic taxonomies of learning--identified in professional literature on learning process--as (a) psycho-motor, (b) cognitive and (c) affective domains. In line with this trend, student measurable learning objectives identified on-the-job at the beginning of each semester have resulted in greater progress toward new learning opportunities as perceived by both students and their employers.

Preliminary evidence indicates that evaluation of student progress is enhanced greatly by this process of setting measurable learning/performance objectives. In nearly all cases in which the system has received preliminary testing, the results have been favorably received by students, employers, and colleges.

Each student in work experience classes here are given regular homework assignments which are to be turned in at consistent intervals. The student is actively encouraged to coordinate his/her on-the-job experience with the homework assignments and accompanying seminars.

PROGRAM BENEFITS: THE EMPLOYER

Although the employer of the Work Experience student has some input on the grade the student will receive, it is the instructor who makes the ultimate decision in this area. Each instructor has an elaborate evaluation system which is used to determine a viable and deserved grade. The intent is to involve the employer in the educational growth process as well as focusing the student on potential improvements which can be gained from the work experience. The

student/veteran enrolled in Work Experience classes is not just getting credit for these classes through the on-the-job experience only, but is required to perform in the classroom as well.

In addition the Work Experience programs here at Napa College have a job placement service, an occupational library, and a work experience advisory committee of prominent businessmen in the community who provide input to both the vocational and general programs. Industrial and business training programs for on-the-job advancement toward mid-management and senior technician careers open a second new area of cooperative education interchange between employers and community colleges. Examples of on-the-job formal training programs are found in service industries, wholesale and retail trade, transportation, manufacturing and civil service. We have identified many of these options here at Napa College.

Before cooperative education was adopted as an ongoing part of company training programs, relatively few students were able to take advantage of these in-house learning activities. Now, however, it is becoming standard procedure to involve co-op students in seminars and programmed learning which leads to advancement of the job. Employers and students are seeing new ways in which the cooperative plan can be used to mutual advantage to develop skilled employees. Mid-management and senior technician jobs have been obtained through the mutual efforts of employers, coordinators, and students.

With the high rate of Viet Nam Veteran unemployment relative to the greater general population, what program deserves more praise? Most Veterans cannot live on the G.I. Bill alone and must work part-time to support themselves and their families. Why work as a "soda jerk" when you can pursue a career with an organization that will allow, and in fact encourage you to go back to school.

VALUE OF CO-OP EDUCATION

For the decade 1975-85 there is every indication that Cooperative Education will be at the center of innovative practices in higher education. Trends which point to (1) improved educational experiences for students (2) direct participation in community activities while in college, (3) specialized training not possible to accomplish in traditional college classes, (4) financial earnings to pay for the high costs of education, and (5) increased success for non-traditional students can be achieved through combining college classroom studies with off-campus paid work experience. Particularly in the nation's community colleges there are growing opportunities for students to gain these advantages. Is this not the intent of the G.I. Bill as stated in Title 38?

THE NEW HORIZONS IN COOPERATIVE EDUCATION project was designed to research, develop, and share with others a number of innovations, most importantly the concepts of (1) measurable learning objectives on the job; (2) comprehensive liberal arts/vocational programs;

(3) improved methods of sharing results with other coordinators; and (4) trends of the future, especially as noted for the western United States. Possibly the Veteran's Administration should consult with the people involved in New Horizons to become aware of the strength of Co-op for Veterans.

Results show that comprehensiveness is improved; retention of students is improved substantially; academic success while working, rather than diminishing as expected, is maintained or grows; continuing education for adult students on the cooperative plan is highly effective; new career opportunities are provided; total income earned by 2,325 students in New Horizons is in excess of \$8,670,000.00; non-traditional college students show progress; affirmative-action opportunities for students as well as employers can be developed; employers are receptive to the program; veterans find the program particularly useful; training, upgrading, and retraining on the job can be accomplished and finally share-and-learn activities for 285 coordinators, faculty and students from other colleges were provided.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, we propose the Cooperative Education (Work Experience) continue to be an approved education course of study for Veterans. Our paper has attempted to point out the value, the goals, and the relationship of Cooperative Education to National, State and VA goals and regulation. Specifically, we recommend that:

- (1) Work Experience/Cooperative Education, both general and vocational, continue to qualify for full VA Benefits.
- (2) Sinclair Jeter, External Cooperative Work Experience Coordinator be contacted to show the growth of cooperative education and work closely with the VA on those VA Co-op regulations.
- (3) Cooperative Education continue to utilize measurable objectives in order to document student growth.
- (4) In the future, Educational Program regulation changes proposed by the VA that are operational and not required to go into the Federal Registrar, but which will affect various Educational programs, should have the involvement of educational leaders of those affected programs for input and definitions.
- (5) The VA take a serious look at the educational approaches of the '70's and contact HEW and educational leaders to see how the VA can be supportive of these approaches.

We feel that this is a valuable program and would appreciate a decision allowing Veterans to receive full benefit for Work Experience/Cooperative Education, both general and vocational

Further, under section 1661, (b), The term "program of education" means any curriculum or any combination of unit courses or subjects pursued at an educational institution which is generally accepted as necessary to fulfill requirements for the attainment of a pre-determined and identified educational, professional, or vocational objective. Such term also means any curriculum of unit courses or subjects pursued at an educational institution which fulfill

requirements for the attainment of more than one predetermined and identified educational, professional, or vocational objective if all the objectives pursued are generally recognized as being reasonably related to a single career field. And in the same section, 1661,

(e) For the purposes of this chapter and chapter 36 of this title, the term "training establishment" means any establishment providing apprenticeship or other training on the job, including those under supervision of a college or university or any state department of education, or any joint apprenticeship committee, or the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training established pursuant to chapter 4C of title 29, United States Code, or any agency of the Federal Government authorized to supervise such training. (added P.L. 90-77, 304(c).)

In a latter section, 1673, concerning disapproval of enrollment in certain courses, Cooperative Education is not specifically mentioned nor is it defined. However, under section 1673 the administration shall not approve enrollment for eligible Veterans in (a) (3) any type of course in which the Administrator finds to be a vocational or recreational in character. Unless the veteran submits justification showing that the course will be of bona fide use in the pursuit of his present or contemplated business or occupation.

These statements seem to indicate to me that the spirit and intent of the Veteran's Readjustment Law support and Cooperation Education approach, both vocationally and generally, as to enhance the Veterans' educational pursuit and development.

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